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# "We're all just as arrogant and self-centered as ever."

by Andy Secher

It was just a little over a year ago that many so-called rock experts were predicting the demise of Van Halen. Their disc **Diver Down** had sputtered in the album charts, and the LP's contents had relied heavily on cover tunes. It seemed that the boys from L.A. had reached a career crossroad; either they would slowly fade into the rock sunset, or they would reach down to their creative core and strike back at their detractors with their strongest album ever.

With the release of 1984 the direction that the band had chosen became clear. From the sparkling synthesizer melodies of *Jump* to the powerhouse riffs of *Panama*, 1984 quickly proved to be Van Halen's magnum opus. Vocalist David Lee Roth, guitarist Edward Van Halen, bassist Michael Anthony and drummer Alex Van Halen emphatically proved that they remain one of the most popular and successful American hard rock bands of all time. As this interview with the inimitable Roth took place, the band was still basking in 1984's chart-topping success.

Heavy Metal Heroes: Was there ever a point before the release of 1984 when you thought the golden era of Van Halen may be a thing of the past?

David Lee Roth: I never think about things like that. What's the point? We're just trying to make music that makes us happy. That's what we've always done. People have said to me, 'Hey Dave, what happened with Diver Down? Why was it a bad album?' Let me say that Diver Down is in no way a bad album. Maybe it didn't sell as many copies as 1984, but if you put it on your stereo it makes you want to get up and dance, and that's exactly what it's supposed to do. Is the only way of judging how good an album is by counting up how many copies it sold? That's pure crap. The answer to your question is no, I never thought the golden era of Van Halen had passed. But then, I never knew we had a golden era.

**HMH:** It does seem strange, however, that the last album had so many cover tunes and this one has none.

DLR: No it doesn't. A great rock and roll song is a great rock and roll song — no matter who writes it. We recorded some cover songs for 1984, but we just didn't need to use them. One of the cuts was the old Wilson Pickett song In The Midnight Hour, but once we did it, we realized it really wasn't a Van Halen song. It would be perfect for one of the new techno-pop bands, but not for us. We've got a ton of stuff on file now that you'll probably never hear till one of us dies. Then the record company will release a 10-album set titled Van Halen Play **Every Song Ever Written.** 

**HMH:** How has the band reacted to the success of **1984**?

**DLR:** It hasn't changed us one bit — we're all just as arrogant and self-centered as ever. Actually, the only major difference is that there are more girls backstage after the show now than ever before.

**HMH:** Van Halen has always been classified as a heavy metal band, but with the increased use of synths on the new album, it seems like you want to leave that classification behind.

**DLR:** I don't think anyone can classify Van Halen as any particular type of band. We stretch across a lot of different musical categories. There's the heavy metal side, but a song like I'll Wait sure isn't heavy metal. I don't know what you'd call it, and I wrote it! We have a lot of different influences in our music, everything from Motown to metal,



Michael, Dave and Eddie in action: "We'll only release a live album if we can really give the fans their money's worth."

and they all pop up somewhere on every record. That's the way we like it. We have no particular stylistic limitations that keep us from doing what we want. Some groups put an acoustic guitar on one track and the record company goes, 'You'd better take that off the record or none of us will be able to buy our beach houses next summer.' Van Halen doesn't have that problem.

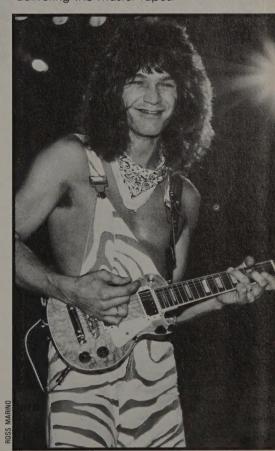
**HMH:** You may not have that problem with your record company, but it's known that there's no love lost between Van Halen and Warner Bros. Records.

**DLR:** That's not really true. They've cleaned up their act a lot over the last year or so. They gave us a lot of support for **1984**, which is something they hadn't always done in the past. I'll admit that I had less than the warmest regards for them after **Diver Down** came out because they let that album die. But they helped **1984** — even though that album was so good they couldn't do anything to mess it up.

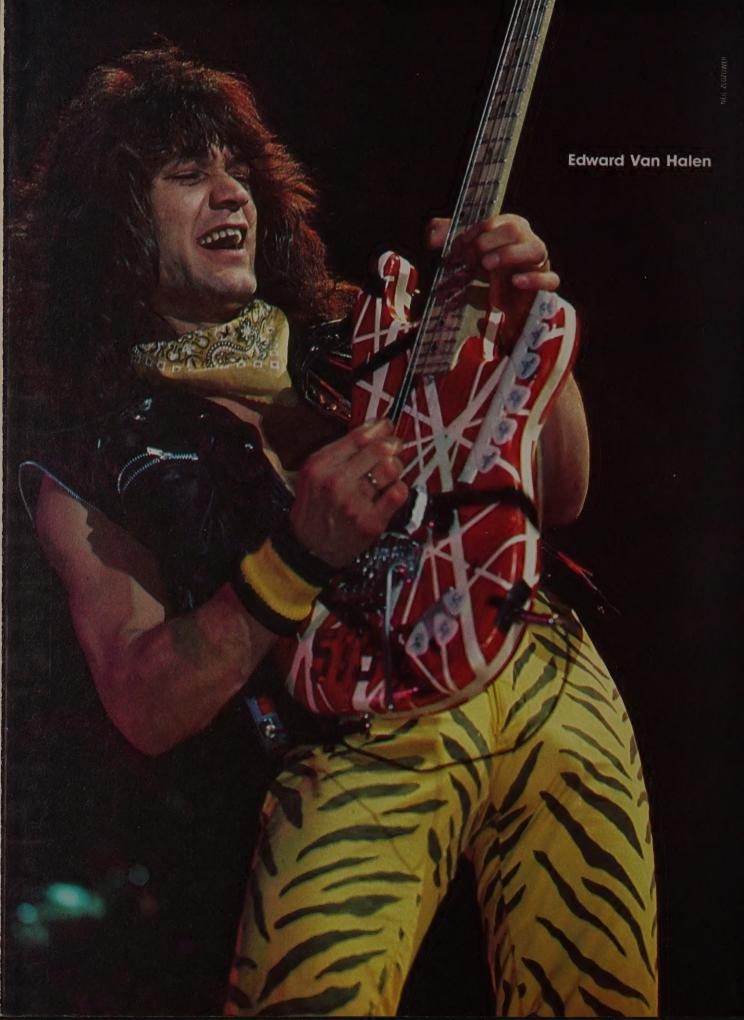
**HMH:** What about the story that they forced you to cancel a European tour and go into the studio to record **1984**?

**DUR:** That's true, but the fact of the matter is that nobody forces Van Halen to do anything we don't want to do. We were planning a tour of Europe, but when the record company made us aware of the fact that we owed them a record before the end of 1983, we were only too happy to comply But, like everything else we do, we did it on

our own schedule. We had about six months to finish the record, but we'd work for a few days then take a week off. We only worked on 1984 for about four weeks total — and we were still a week late in delivering the master tapes.



Eddie Van Halen: While he plays keyboards throughout 1984. the guitar remains his top priority.



**HMH:** We've also heard that there's been quite a bit of conflict within the band. Didn't Edward recently say that he and Alex were Van Halen, and that everybody else was irrelevant?

DUR: Well, he didn't put it quite that way. Everyone has to blow off a little steam every now and then, and we've grown to accept that. When you're on the road for months at a time like we are, you can occasionally get on each other's nerves. That's just part of being human. We have four very different personalities involved in this band, and occasionally we each say and do something that may sound or look a little bit silly. That's just part of being in Van Halen though, there's nothing more to it

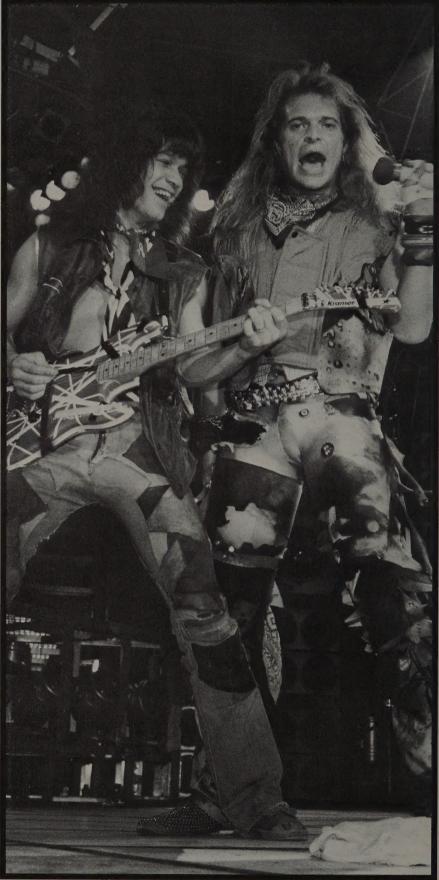
HMH: How much longer do you figure to stay on the road? DLR: We just may keep touring forever. Everywhere we've gone the crowds have been unbelievable. When you've spent as much time and effort getting a tour together as we have with this one, you have to tour for months just to break even. We're taking nine trucks on the road with us wherever we go that's a convoy. There are 75 people working for us full-time that's a lot of mouths to feed and hotel bills to pay. We've never believed in touring for a few weeks then going on vacation. The people in Ogden, Utah and Bristol, England have just as much right to see our show as the people in New York and L.A.

**HMH:** The stage show, as always, gives each band member plenty of room to shine. Everybody gets a lengthy solo, and you have some incredibly funny stage raps. How do you come up with lines like 'This is real Jack Daniels I'm drinking — what do you think this is Quiet Riot?'

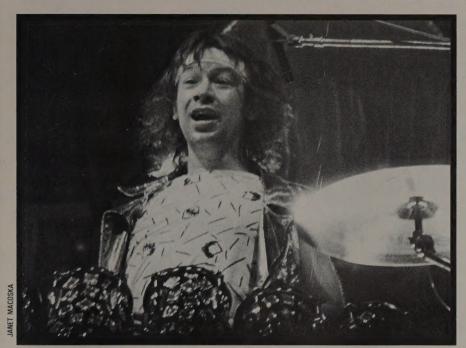
**DUR:** (laughing) Believe me, I don't lie awake at night dreaming them up. Each of us has a talent — Edward's brilliant with a guitar, I happen to have a feel for words. I write almost all of the band's lyrics, and the stage raps just happen naturally. Some of the better ones I might remember and bring back from time to time, but I like to keep things fresh and exciting. A remark like the one you mentioned isn't malicious, it's the truth. If people find it funny, that's great.

**HMH:** Then it would seem that there's a bit of animosity between Van Halen and Quiet Riot, is that true?

DLR: Nah, none at all. We've known



"We have four very different personalities in this band, and occasionally we each say and do something that may sound or look a bit silly."



Alex Van Halen: "Originally I wanted to play guitar, but I found out that you can get your aggressions out better on drums."

those guys for a while, and we've got nothing but respect for what they've done. I haven't seen them play live for quite some time, so I really can't say how good they're sounding, but I bought their first album, and I like parts of it. I know that people say they've borrowed a lot from us, and that's okay. Everyone has influences, the trick is to turn that into inspiration. I hope that's what they've done.

**HMH:** How do you view the whole West Coast heavy metal explosion with groups like Motley Crue, Ratt, Quiet Riot, W.A.S.P. and Dokken all having major record deals?

DLR: I think it's great. The more rock and roll bands that can be successful the better. I love going to clubs, and I've been able to see a lot of those groups over the last few years. I'm not necessarily going out looking for hard rock bands -I'll go out and see anything. I'll go to black clubs or clubs where Latin music is being played. I just love all kinds of music, so any time any part of the music scene becomes recognized I'm happy. The fact that heavy metal bands are in the limelight at the moment is irrelevant as far as I'm concerned.

**HMH:** So what lies ahead for Van Halen? We know you're setting off on a tour of Europe and the Orient, and we've heard rumors that a live album may emerge from all this road work, is that true?

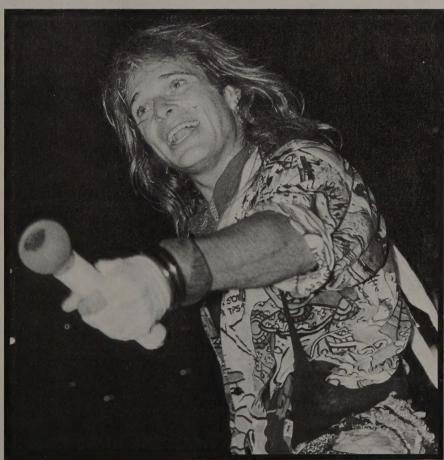
**DUR:** It's a distinct possibility. We're the only band I know that's never done one of those live radio shows. That's because we want the fans to

think they're getting something really special if and when we finally decide to do a live album. We've been recording concerts for years and years, and our only major problem about releasing a live

album is how to do it and still give the fans something new for their money. I remember how exciting the Who's **Live At Leeds** LP was. If we could do something like that, we'd release it in a second. But I don't know exactly what we'll do with the live tapes we have. We probably won't make a decision until we're forced into it by some lawyers or some guys from the record company.

**HMH:** David, what would you do if you weren't fronting one of the most successful rock bands in history?

**DLR:** I really can't picture myself as an accountant, can you? I was always something of a rebel who did what he wanted when he wanted, so if I wasn't in a rock and roll band I'd probably be traveling around the world doing odd jobs to keep myself fed and clothed. That would be fine with me. I still get to travel around the world, but when you're in a successful band it's not exactly a day to day proposition. You know where you're going to be at 10:53 in the morning three months from now, but that's alright. After all, it's not where you're going, but how you get there.



DLR: "I really can't picture myself as an accountant, can you?"



Dave and Michael: "We like all sorts of music — we're not just into hard rock."

# **PANAMA**

(As recorded by Van Halen)

EDWARD VAN HALEN ALEX VAN HALEN MICHAEL ANTHONY DAVID LEE ROTH

Jump back
What's that sound
Here she comes
Foot tappin' top down
Hot shoe burnin' down the avenue
Model citizen
Zero discipline.

Don't you know she's coming home to me You'll lose her in the turn I'll get her.

> Panama Panama

Panama Panama.

Ain't nothin' like it
Her shiny machine
Got the feel for the wheel
Keep the movin' parts clean
Hot shoe burnin' down the avenue
Got an on ramp cutting through my
bedroom.

Don't you know she's coming home to me You'll lose her in the turn I'll get her.

> Panama Panama Panama Panama.

(Spoken)
Yeah we're running a little bit hot tonight

I can barely see the road from the heat coming off it
I reach down between my legs
And ease the seat back.

She's blindin'
I'm flyin'
Right behind in the rearview mirror
now
Got the fearin'
Power steerin'
Pistons poppin'
Ain't no stopping now.

Panama Panama Panama Panama Panama Panama

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Dave and Michael: "We like all sorts of music — we're not just into hard rock."

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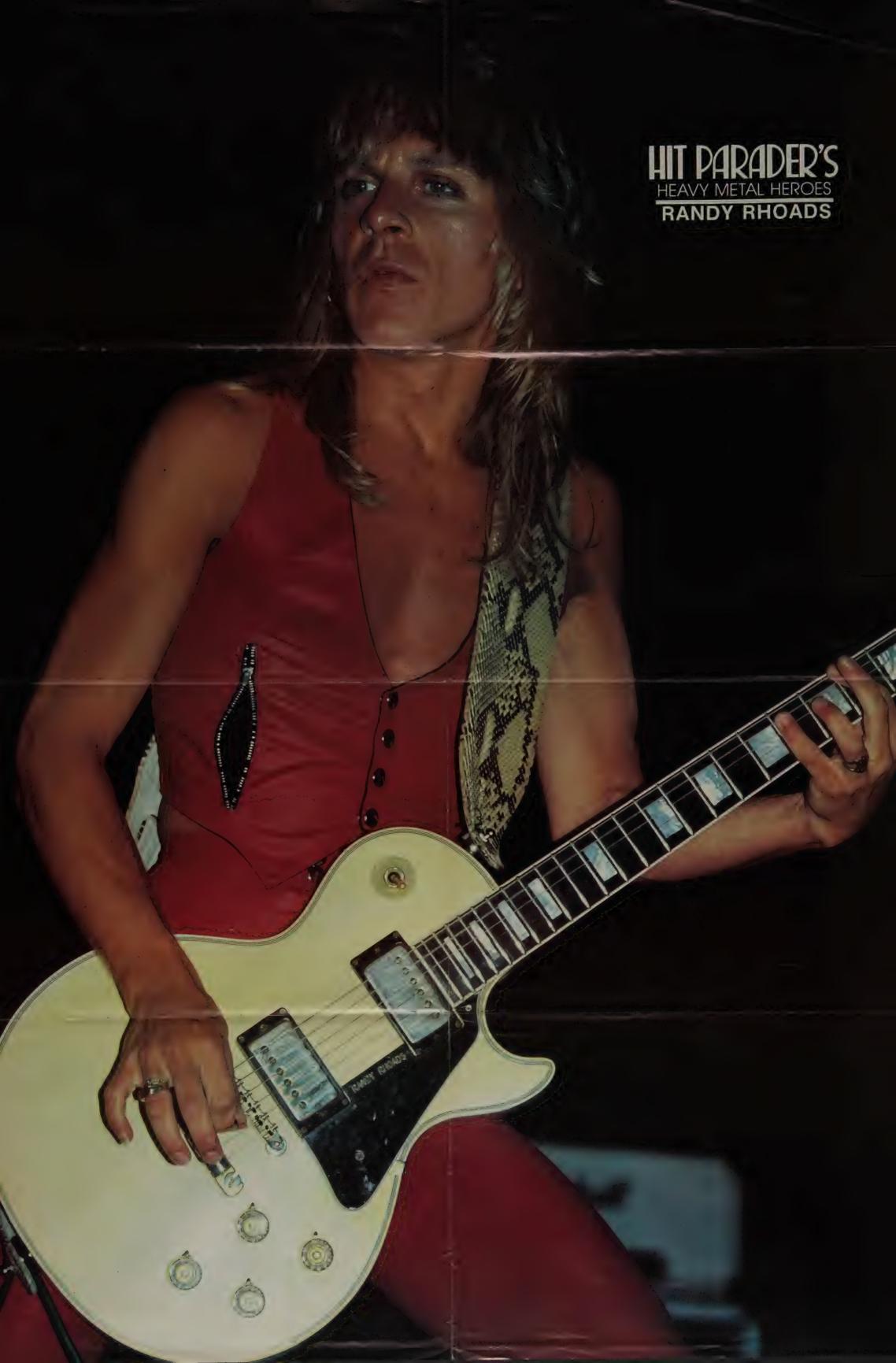
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The Crue (left to right): Tommy Lee, Vince Neil, Mick Mars, Nikki Sixx.

# MOTLEY CRUE CALLES By Andy Secher

Motley Crue's Nikki Sixx sat in the band's crowded dressing room gently fondling a half-empty bottle of Jack Daniels. "This is what keeps me going," the black-haired bassist said with a road-weary smile. "If it wasn't for old Jack sometimes I don't know if I'd make it through the day. All the attention we get can really begin to wear you down after awhile — people don't ever give us a chance to stop being Motley Crue. There are always girls waiting to be with us, and fans who want an autograph or a piece of my clothes. Believe me, without getting drunk most of the time, we'd all probably be dead by now."

# "We're not surprised by the success we've had. We honestly believe that we could be one of the biggest bands in the world."



Sixx (left) and Mars: "We're not one of those bands that acts insane for two hours on stage then goes home to drink warm milk."

Oh, the difficulty of being a successful rock and roll star. Wine, women and song — the best of everything — and despite Sixx's half-hearted denunciation of his lifestyle, he and the rest of Motley Crue wouldn't have it any other way.

"I love doing this," he added as he took another slug from his bottle of Jack Black. "I don't mean to give the impression that I'm not happy with the lives we lead. It's more that it takes a little getting used to. People forget that we haven't been touring around the country for years and years like some other groups. A lot of the things that are happening to us now are brand new experiences. We haven't learned to pace ourselves yet. We're Motley Crue 24-hours-a-day, every day, and that can be an energy drain on anyone. But we're young and we're hungry, so everything's great. All I know is that this has been the best year of

It's hard to believe that only 12 months ago, the Crue were little more than just another hard rock band exhibiting great promise but enjoying minimal success. Their debut album, Too Fast For Love, had barely dented the sales charts, and their first national tour generated about as much excitement as a carrot stick at a fat farm. Then with the release of their second LP, Shout At The Devil, the Crue suddenly blossomed into the hottest heavy metal band in the world. Sixx. along with guitarist Mick Mars, vocalist Vince Neil and drummer Tommy Lee found themselves riding a platinum tidal wave which catapulted them to the very top of the rock and roll hierarchy.

"We're not surprised by the success we've had," gloated Vince as he combed his mane of bleached blond hair. "We honestly believed that we could be one of the biggest bands in the world. We've worked hard to get our stage show to be exciting, and we've always known that our music rocked. I think that

# "We don't really look for trouble, it just seems to find us."

our success had a lot more to do with people getting the chance to see and hear us than it did with us improving. The first album got no radio airplay, and we didn't do any expensive videos for it. Those were things that made **Shout At**The Devil a hit. Everyone knew what we looked like and what we sounded like because of MTV."

"Yeah, we never thought we'd get our videos on MTV after the stunt we pulled up there," Sixx added with glee. "When we delivered the video for Looks That Kill awhile back, we took a cake along with us. Well, everybody up there thought we were such nice guys because we had brought this cake for them to enjoy. So just when everybody was getting hungry, we all whipped out these huge biker chains and smashed that cake to hell. You should have seen the expression on the veejay's face. I thought she was gonna have a heart attack and drop dead on the spot. I guess she was used



to dealing with all the new wave wimps."

Outrage has become the stock and trade of Motley Crue's success. From their frequent arrests for transporting knives and chains through airport metal detectors, to their legendary rumbles throughout their home city of Los Angeles, these four mop tops have added a new chapter to the book of heavy metal mayhem. Even the renowned loon Ozzy Osbourne has stated, "Those guys are crazy. I love them all dearly, but they make me look like the most sane man in the world."

"We don't really look for trouble, it just seems to find us," Nikki said. "I remember a few months ago when Vince and I got in this big brawl outside of a club. We were slugging it out with about a half-dozen bikers, and quite honestly, we were getting the crap kicked out of us. It was really becoming a life and death situation. We were just punching



Tommy Lee: In the last year he's dated three different Penthouse Pets.





taking the law into your own hands."

Of course, the band's off stage craziness is mirrored in their bizarre stage show, where black leather outfits, ghoulish makeup and dynamic heavy metal sounds have made them a top concert draw throughout the U.S. For the Crue, the stage is merely an extension of the wild and crazy world that surrounds them.

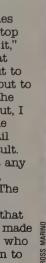
"We're not one of those bands that acts insane for two hours on stage then goes home to drink warm milk," Sixx explained. "That attitude really makes me sick. There are groups who have about as much understanding of what rock and roll is all about as my grandmother, and they're making a lot of money by fooling the fans. I'm not gonna name any names, but anyone with eyes and ears knows who I'm talking about. There are bands who've been around for 10 years that are just

"We're not the type of band that's going to attract Farrah Fawcett backstage after the

Mick Mars: "I'd probably be programming computers if I wasn't playing rock and roll."

and kicking everything that moved. I had a chain with me, so I was busting every head I could reach.

"Evidently, some plain-clothes cops had joined in trying to stop the fight, but we didn't know it, he added. "All I knew was that everyone except Vince was out to cut my throat, so I wasn't about to stop and ask somebody who the hell they were. As it turned out, I decked one of the cops and the next thing I knew I was in jail charged with aggravated assault. That's a five-year rap without any chance for probation. Luckily, everything worked out okay. The band was able to bail me out because we had a gig to play that night. We took the money we made from the show, found the cop who had arrested me, and paid him to drop the charges. That's known as





WALTER/PHOTOFEATURES

going through the paces now without any conviction or feeling. They're just too lazy to go out and look for a real job and leave rock and roll to bands that really believe in the music.

"People say that we've been influenced by groups like Kiss," he added. "That might be true a little, but just listen to what they're playing these days and then check us out. I'm not putting anyone down - it's just that some people have lost touch with their audience. That'll never happen to us. We'll never be into riding in separate limos and hanging out in the poshest restaurants. We still want a hot set of wheels we can drive ourselves, and we want to hang out in the sleaziest dives we can find. That's where Motley Crue feels really at home."

The band's fondness for "sleaze" has already become legendary. Tales of their excesses with scores of groupies in hotel rooms and their passion for what Sixx admitted was "kinky stuff" has become a well-known part of heavy metal folklore. Nikki sees nothing wrong with the Crue's free-spirited attitudes.

Unfortunately, in addition to the notoriety the band has derived from their sexual predilections, the Crue has also become embroiled as prime characters in the "Satan In Rock" debate. With their fondness for the demonic pentagram, which is emblazoned on Tommy Lee's drum riser, and an album titled Shout At The Devil, the Crue have met with repeated charges that they are the masterminds of some mysterious cult designed to turn the thoughts of America's adolescent masses away from a good, clean God-fearing American way of life. Sixx, along with the other Cruesters, finds these charges to be absurd.

"It's absolutely insane, isn't it?" he asked innocently. "We're about as Satanic as a busload of nuns. We're telling people to shout at authority on **Shout At The Devil**— it has nothing at all to do with Satan. In truth, the devil is anyone who wants to keep you down, whether it's your parents, your teacher or your boss. We're telling everyone to stand up for what they believe to be right and to shout at everyone who wants to keep you in your place. That's not satanic is it?

"The controversy over the pentagram is just as silly," he

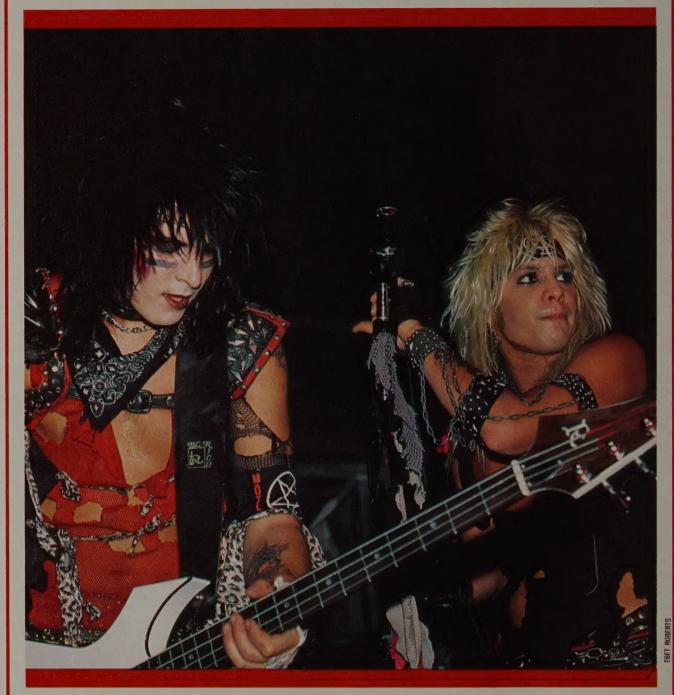
added. "It's just a symbol I came across a few years ago while reading a book on ancient mythology. It looked like a star, which in my mind is a very positive thing, so we incorporated it into our act. I think the truth of the matter is that we scare people — at least those too old to appreciate what we do. They see us

as some evil force that's trying to steal their kids away from them. Of course, they try to stop us by making us look dangerous and evil. Let me assure you," he said with a sly grin. "With so many pretty girls to love and bottles of Jack Daniels to drink, dealing with the devil is the last thing on my mind"



DEBRA TREBITZ

Vince in action: "I go berserk when I get on stage."



Nikki and Vince: "We're about as satanic as a busload of nuns."

# TOO YOUNG TO FALL IN LOVE

(As recorded by Motley Crue)

**NIKKI SIXX** 

You say our love is like dynamite Open your eyes 'cause it's like fire and ice Well you're killing me your love's a guillotine Why don't you just set me free yeah.

> Too young to fall in love Too young to fall in love Too young to fall in love.

Run for the hills
We're sinners and saints
Not a woman but a whore
I can taste the hate
Well now I'm killin' you
Watch your face turning blue

Not yet a man just a punk in the street yeah.

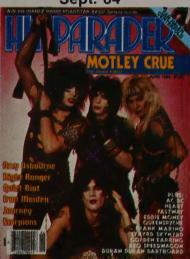
Too young to fall in love Too young to fall in love Too young to fall in love.

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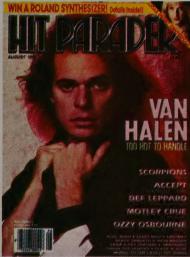
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